The Secret Tribunal:

A PLAY.

IN

FIVE ACTS.

By JAMES BOADEN,

AUTHOR OF

FONTAINVILLE FOREST,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN.

" He, that has light within his own clear breast,
" May sit i'th' centre, and enjoy bright day."

MILTON.

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DEDICATION.

TO

MISS WALLIS,

DEAR MADAM,

INCLINATION, as well as gratitude, leads me to offer you this Play, ſo highly indebted to your powers upon the Stage.

I know too well the expanded nature of your mind, to believe that this compliment, if it were excluſive, could gratify you. Allow me therefore to combine, with a particular acknowledgment to YOURSELF, my ſincere thanks for the very powerful exertions of the OTHER Performers on the Scene. I think myſelf peculiarly happy in the warmth of friendſhip which I have from all experienced upon the preſent occaſion. To Mr. LEWIS, the Manager, I am infinitely obliged for unremitting aſſiduity in the rehearſals of the Play, and much valuable advice.

I have

I have only to wiſh, my Dear Madam, that your ſucceſs may conſtantly correſpond with your VIRTUES, and that you may long continue to adorn alike the Dramatic Stage and that of real life. With the moſt ſincere admiration and eſteem, I have the honour to be

Your very obedient

Humble Servant,

JAMES BOADEN,

Warren-ſtreet, Fitzroy-ſquare.

PROLOGUE.

Written by JOHN LITCHFIELD, Esq.

Spoken by MR. MACREADY.

LONG hath the TRAGIC MUSE, in ſecret mourn'd
Her pow'r abus'd, her empire overturn'd,
Her ſacred laws in mixt confuſion toſt;
Her rights inſulted, and her virtues loſt—
Her children long profeſs'd, diſpute her reign,
Deſerting *her's* to hold HER SISTER'S train.
" No griefs ſublime *now* ſwell th' impaſſion'd breaſt,
" Array'd in Truth's, or flowery Fiction's veſt;
" No melting tear now ſwims in ſorrow's eye,
" Nor terror ſcreams—nor pity vents the ſigh.
" Time was, when GENIUS ſtruck the plaintive lyre,
" And FANCY lent her intellectual fire,
" When POETS rais'd the ſympathetic ſtrain,
" And claim'd COMPASSION'S tear—nor claim'd in vain."
The changeling FASHION now diſdains to pay
Her ſullen tribute to the *ſerious* lay;
While cold and impotent our Authors move,
And ſcorn to wake or PITY, FEAR or LOVE,
By *ſecondary* means they ſtrive to raiſe
The paltry meed of meretricious praiſe;
With *flags, ſpears, helmets* and *proceſſions* riſe,
" Pride, pomp and circumſtance" of ſcenic ſtrife,
To ſtoried deeds of bold emprize they lead,
An army conquered—or a nation freed—

Prompter

Prompters and *properties* their pow'rs unite
And *drum, fife, trumpet,* rouſe the mimic fight.
Hark! HERE a *charge*—the *trumpet*—THERE *retreat*—
A VICTORY *here*—*tattoo*—and *there* DEFEAT.
Thus ACTION buſtle is, and PASSION rage,
As Bards decree, or mightier Chiefs engage;
While as the fight grows *warm*, the Pit are *froze*,
The Audience *ſhiver* as the Actor *glows*.

" Nor more the VERSE has cunning ſkill to wind
" The ſecret ſprings that agitate the mind:
" High rais'd on ſtilts, in meaſur'd Proſe, it creeps,
" While JUDGMENT ſickens, and while FANCY ſleeps;
" Nor pauſe of THOUGHT nor PASSION's vivid glow
" Diſturb its ſtudied but unmeaning flow—
" Monotonous and dull the periods roll,
" Allure the *ear* but leave untouch'd the SOUL.
" Nature, howe'er, is never *all the ſame*,
" In *multifarious* forms SHE makes her claim,
" EXPRESSION varies as the PASSION turns,
" *Softens* with LOVE or with RESENTMENT *burns*."

This night, a BARD, to different views inclin'd,
Demands the tribute of the willing mind;
Happy—if ſuch his enterprizing art,
To waken FEELING, and to touch—THE HEART.

What time the policy of *German* Rule
Fetter'd the native freedom of the ſoul;
When SUPERSTITION held her ſanguine ſtate,
And dealt, at will, the rapid blow of fate;
The world beheld all pledge of *ſafety* gone,
And even MONARCHS TREMBLED ON THE THRONE.
JUDGES, with functions unconfin'd and *free*,
At midnight iſſued many a dark decree—

The

PROLOGUE.

The culprit ONCE CONDEMN'D—a numerous Band
Of ſecret *Agents*, hunt him through the land;
Nor age, nor character, nor kin have force,
To ſtay their barbarous unrelenting courſe;
Bound by an OATH th' avenging ſteel to draw,
GUILT became *piety*, and *murder* LAW.

BRITAIN! rejoice!—The envied pow'r is THINE,
To puniſh malice, and to thwart deſign;
Open as day *our* Courts judicial move,
And RICH or POOR their *equal* influence prove;
REJOICE! Your UPRIGHT JURIES make you *free*,
Bulwarks of FAME, of LIFE and LIBERTY.

To you, our AUTHOR now ſubmits his cauſe,
Unbiaſs'd guardians of dramatic laws;
GUILTY or NOT—there reſts at once his *all*,
For by you VERDICT—he muſt ſtand or fall.

PERSONS.

PERSONS.

DUKE OF WIRTEMBERG, ... *Mr. Macready.*

RATIBOR, his Brother, ... *Mr. Pope.*

HERMAN, his Nephew, ... *Mr. Holman.*

HOLSTEIN, an old Soldier, ... *Mr. Harley.*

ULRIC, an Agent of the Secret Tribunal, ... *Mr. Middleton.*

RUDOLPH, a Soldier of Ratibor's Corps, ... *Mr. Williamson.*

BADENDORFF, a Physician, ... *Mr. Powell.*

PRINCIPAL JUDGE OF THE TRIBUNAL, ... *Mr. Hull.*

MINISTER OF VENGEANCE, ... *Mr. Thompson.*

ELLEN HOLSTEIN, ... *Miss Morris.*

IDA, her Daughter, ... *Miss Wallis.*

JUDGES, BARONS, CLERGY, SOLDIERS, SERVANTS, &c.

SCENE—WIRTEMBERG, IN SUABIA.

N. B. For the leading incident of this Piece, and the customs of the Tribunal, the Author is indebted to the work of Professor KRAMER.

THE

SECRET TRIBUNAL:

A PLAY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Holſtein's Houſe.

HOLSTEIN *and* ELLEN.

HOLSTEIN.

ALTHOUGH now paſt the exerciſe of arms,
And in inglorious eaſe condemn'd to waſte
The brief remains of life—My fancy ranges
With our brave Prince th' experienced files of war,
And paints him governing the courſe of battle;
Beholds him ſtrike the oppoſer to the ground,
And aids his pity to relieve the fallen.

ELLEN.

Heaven's grace preſerve him to his happy people!
I grieve no welcome waits on his return,
Where it would charm the moſt, upon the brow
Of our beloved Ducheſs.

HOLSTEIN.

Her complaint,
Yields it not then to time and medicine?
Has Ida lately been here from the Palace?

ELLEN.

Not lately—for our lovely child has gain'd
So warm a ſeat within the generous breaſt
Of our dear miſtreſs, that ſhe ſeems to live
But while her duteous ſervices are paid,
And every help is miniſter'd by Ida.

HOLSTEIN.

Danger may lurk beneath ſuch proud diſtinction.
The favourite of a Prince is doom'd to feed
On hollow ſmiles, and envious adulation:
To raiſe, or to repulſe, alike are fatal;
He rears ingratitude that will ſupplant him,
And all whom he repells are ſworn his foes.

ELLEN.

Yet when her Highneſs ſought the lovely child,
Struck

Struck by her beauty, innocence and youth,
Could we refuſe her?

HOLSTEIN.

No, I mean not that.
But ſtill my fondneſs aches for her return.
And, when the healing power ſhall deign to bleſs,
With former health, my royal miſtreſs, then,
I will entreat her to reſtore our darling
To thoſe, whom quiet ſhuns, while ſhe is abſent.

ELLEN.

But ſee, the nephew of Duke Wirtemberg;
The gentle Herman comes in haſte from Court—
I hope his tidings are thus wing'd by comfort.

Enter HERMAN.

Health and the lengthen'd happineſs of life,
Attend my much rever'd and valu'd friends.

HOLSTEIN.

We feel this honour ſenſibly, my Lord.
May we indulge a hope, your aunt recovers?

HERMAN.

We flatter ſtill ourſelves with the belief;
And what we pant for credulouſly coin;
But the phyſicians fear her—all the aids
Of ſcience, and the many-breathed prayer

From holy lips, yet keep her from the ſkies,
The lovely Ida——

ELLEN.

Is my daughter well?

HERMAN.

She ſuffers but in ſympathizing woe.
Her fondeſt greeting, to each honour'd parent,
Salutes you by my tongue.—She longs to ſee you.

ELLEN.

We've taught ourſelves, to bear a tedious abſence,
From which the ſlighteſt good reſults to one,
To whom we moſt owe duty and affection.

HERMAN,

My valiant friend, if now your leiſure ſerves,
I could deſire ſome private ſpeech with you;
If not, I'll wait a fitter ſeaſon.

HOLSTEIN.

Sir,
I am entirely your's. My dear your leave.

ELLEN.

Adieu, my Lord.

[*Exit.*

HERMAN.

HERMAN.

I will not waſte a moment
In idle preparation of my ſuit.
Thus ſpeaking with the frankneſs of a ſoldier,
I lay my heart plainly, at once, before you.
The gracious Ida, your moſt beauteous daughter,
Has here inſpir'd the moſt unbounded love.

HOLSTEIN.

Unwelcome tidings! O, my fears preſag'd this.
[*aſide.*

HERMAN.

I could not reconcile to manly conduct
A cloſe clandeſtine furtherance of my paſſion;
To her moſt honour'd parent, I addreſs me,
Court his indulgence, bow to his deciſion.

HOLSTEIN.

Young Prince, is this a time for ſuch a theme,
Ev'n were I prone to liſten to the honour,
When ſickneſs menaces the throne itſelf?

HERMAN.

Spare this reproach, for even there, my friend,
Paſſion collected fuel to the flame,
And love illum'd his torch at pity's ſhrine.
I ſaw my Ida, like ſome angel, tend
The pillow of diſeaſe, whoſe pallid brow,

Fluſh'd at the comfort, which her care beſtow'd;
While ſhe, unwearied, all relief declin'd,
And ſeem'd th' embodied ſoul of conſolation.

HOLSTEIN.

Excuſe me, if I hear no more, young friend,
Your candour has my praiſe—is worthy of you.
I have a debt, like you, to open dealing.
My obligations to the Duke, my maſter,
Forbid my countenance, where his is wanting,
If he object not to your lowly choice,
I can find nought but honour in the union.

HERMAN.

My friend, my father, take my fervent thanks.
Ever indulgent, the thrice gracious Duke
Will never frown upon my chaſte deſires.
Adieu! may every bliſs deſcend upon you,
That I have power to wiſh, or you enjoy.

[*Exit.*

HOLSTEIN.

Fare you well! raſh and inconſiderate youth!
Such is the nature of that hour of prime!
The bud of young deſire ſhoots unſuſpecting,
Touch'd by the genial gales of ripening time;
Regardleſs of the wayward blaſts of winter,
That ſmite the evening of a day all ſunſhine;
Blighting the unguarded boſom of the flow'r,
Whoſe form then withers, and its ſweets expire.

[*Exit.*

SCENE

SCENE, *The Palace.*

Enter RATIBOR.

The promis'd day of power at length dawns on me:
One daring ſtep will ſeat me on a throne.
The Duke returns but ſlenderly attended,
A band of brave aſſociates ſhall aſſail him,
And rid me of my only bar, this BROTHER!
Curſe on my mind for conjuring up that term!
To that word prejudice and folly join
Senſations, deadly to ambition.
And yet, fraternal diſcord is as common
As any rebel paſſion of our natures,
And the firſt blood, that ſtain'd the new-made earth,
Envy ſhed forth, and by a brother's hand.
But ſee, where Ida comes to ſtill this tempeſt.

Enter IDA.

My Lord, your ſiſter charg'd me to enquire,
If your Grace knows when to expect the Duke?
Alas, I fear he will arrive too late,
And find his angel wife a ſpeechleſs corſe.

RATIBOR.

Your fears, dear maid, outrun all likelihood—
With her phyſicians I have held ſome converſe,
And they incline to give me better hopes.

IDA.

My Lord, my conſtant view of her condition
Forbids me to indulge ſuch grateful thoughts,
Her patient temper yields not to complaint,
But all the healing art will ne'er prevail,
If ſymptoms may be known of diſſolution.

RATIBOR.

O miſ-becoming terrors! Think ye not
The preſence of her huſband will diſpoſe
Her drooping powers to happy renovation?
Truſt me no cordial to the heart has force
Equal to him, whoſe image it enfolds.

IDA.

This I can well believe.

RATIBOR.

And why my fair one?
Has any ſuitor yet upon thy heart
Impreſs'd indelibly his gay perfections?
This is a perilous ſpot for youthful beauty.

IDA.

I am unconſcious of ſuch indiſcretion.

RATIBOR.

The ſoft confeſſion of your eye denies

The coy reſerve that lingers on your tongue,
I had expected, to a friend like me,
Not youthful, and thus fit for confidence,
A warm eulogium on ſome favour'd ſwain,

IDA.

At whom thus points your Grace?

RATIBOR.

Perhaps at Herman.
He has diſcernment—You have youth and beauty,
It is, as I ſuſpected. (*aſide*)

IDA,

Sure, my Lord,
You do not deem your handmaid ſo preſuming!
The Prince is dearly amiable—but I,
Born in an humble ſphere, attract not him,

RATIBOR,

O diſregard the difference of rank,
Love levels the diſtinctions of the world,
And raiſes up the Peaſant to the Prince.
Perhaps your beauties have obtain'd an intereſt
In rank to his ſuperior far—I've ſaid it,
Your prudence will digeſt the hint at leiſure.
Say to the Dutcheſs, that my royal Brother
Has left the camp, and will be here to-morrow,
At ſome, not diſtant period, loveliest Ida,

I ſhall demand your private ear awhile;
Adieu! a ſplendid lot awaits you.

[*Exit.*

IDA.

(*Curteſies low, and ariſes with an expreſſion of terror.*)

How!
Did I hear rightly? What ſaid Ratibor?
Intereſt obtain'd in far ſuperior rank!
It is too clear—O my beloved Herman,
What fiend has ſtarted thee ſo dread a rival?

Enter HERMAN.

My love, if ent'ring now, my ears deceiv'd not,
I heard my name, and coupled with a rival!
Give me the cauſe of that alarming junction.

IDA.

O Prince, I beg you leave me to my fate!
I was not fram'd to be the ſport of greatneſs;
And, little ſuited to its flowery bands,
Suffer me to obliterate the paſt,
And fly diſtinction, that would make me wretched.

HERMAN.

What ſudden change is this? O tell me, Ida,
Speak clearly, inſtantly, leſt my deſpair
Daſh your fond victim ſenſeleſs at your feet—
Thou ſaid'ſt I had a rival! Who is he?

Give

Give me the wretch's hated name, that I
May dare him to conteſt his claims with me,
And rid you of the ſuit—

IDA.

Of Ratibor.

HERMAN.

My uncle! then indeed I find a rival,
The moſt pernicious that my mind could image!
His influence with the Duke, and more his power
As a chief member of that dreadful band,
Who judge in ſecret—nay the conſtant hate
Which ſpite of artifice, I know he bears me—
All call for double vigilance againſt him.

IDA.

O, Herman, why ſhould I excite a conteſt,
Where moſt I wiſh for harmony and love?
Let me retire, and peace will be reſtor'd.

HERMAN.

No, I diſdain the creeping timid prudence,
That gives up honour to make ſure of ſafety.
To your dear father, I have frankly pleaded
That paſſion which muſt govern all my life:
By him referr'd where moſt I owe allegiance,
I'll truſt to goodneſs which has ever flow'd
From Wirtemberg upon his favour'd Herman.

[*Exeunt.*

A gloomy

A gloomy Vault.

RATIBOR *enters.*

Since I have form'd this bold deſign, a cold
And aguiſh tremor ſhakes my very fleſh,
And my heart heaves at every noiſe around me:
When the alarm ſubſides, a chilly dew
Bathes all my limbs—And yet it is'n't done!
How when he falls beneath the hireling dagger?
A diadem! will that repay theſe ſhudders?
The eſſay may ſoon be made, for here comes Rudolph.

Enter RUDOLPH.

(Dreſſed as a Member of the Secret Tribunal.)

My Lord, I wait your ultimate directions.
The ſums of gold have ſilenc'd every ſcruple;
Your Brother dies, had he a thouſand lives,

RATIBOR.

Name not the hated tie to me, good Rudolph.
The troops, you ſay, are well diſpos'd and ready—
His way lies through the wood that ſkirts the town;
There then aſſault him; and, remember, friend,
Transfix the body to ſome blighted oak,
And leave the weapon there; the deed will then
Seem the juſt vengeance of the Secret Judges,
And none will queſtion the proceeding further.

RUDOLPH.

RUDOLPH.

Not of a Prince ſo ſlain?

RATIBOR.

Art thou to learn
The pow'r by the inviſibles poſſeſs'd?
Which makes the Emperor tremble on his throne.
And, through this country more eſpecially,
Judges and puniſhes in ſecreſy.
He is a heretick, the ſlave of Huſs,
And therefore blotted from the breaſt of love,
Devoted to deſtruction.

RUDOLPH.

Deem it done.
I ſhall acquaint you how we ſpeed to-morrow.

RATIBOR.

Rudolph, remember, I expect your haſte;
Exchange your dreſs, and come ſtrait to my chamber.

RUDOLPH.

Ere noon, my Lord, expect me.

[*Exit.*

RATIBOR.

Fare you well.
Would he had led me hence! fie on theſe terrors!
O guilt, that, ſeeking to conceal its purpoſe,
Flies to a ſpot, that aggravates the horror!
If any one ſhould croſs me in my path,
Would not my trembling limbs betray my purpoſe?
O, who can baniſh night, and talk down conſcience?
The beams of day and revelry combin'd
May diſſipate this ſickneſs of the ſoul—
And then ambition crown'd! There's comfort ſtill.

[*Goes off in alarm.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Wood.

Enter DUKE WIRTEMBERG, *and Train, aſſaulted.*

[*Exeunt.*

Re-enter RUDOLPH,

With his ſword drawn and bloody.

Curſe on this failing hand—the Duke eſcaped!
The country ſoon will riſe, and vengeance reach me.
I dare not truſt to Ratibor's protection.
Let me then fly!

Enter HERMAN.

Who talks of flight, the noiſe,
That echoes through the wood, ſpeaks ſome attack,
And this man the aſſaſſin—yield thee, ſlave.

[*They fight, in the ſcuffle both are diſarmed, and Herman takes up Rudolph's ſword, who ruſhes off with Herman's.*]

His ſword ſtill ſtain'd with blood is in my hand!
Has treaſon dar'd attack our gracious Prince?
Here lay his path, and I had hope to meet him,
And ſo prepare him for the mournful viſit.

Let

Let me inſpect this weapon—gracious Heaven!
Upon the blade I read a legend plainly—
"Regiment of Ratibor." Ungrateful villain,
Thus to conſpire againſt a brother's life—
But hark, what noiſe!

SOLDIERS, PEASANTS.

SOLDIER.

This way th' aſſaſſin fled.
Ha! this is he! aſſail him friends, the wretch,
Whoſe ſword is recent from the bloody ſtriſe.

2d SOLDIER.

Yield, or thou dy'ſt—

HERMAN.

How, Soldiers! know ye not
Your Prince, 'tis Herman you aſſault thus rudely.

SOLDIER.

Herman! forgive me, Sir, we find you here,
With moſt ſuſpicious circumſtance attending;
You muſt ſubmit, and go hence to the caſtle.

HERMAN.

I mean not to diſpute your order, Soldiers,
Nor here explain myſelf—Before the Duke
I may diſcloſe a myſtery of horror.

SOLDIER.

SOLDIER.

Your ſword, my Lord.

HERMAN.

Aye friend, be ſure you keep it!
Unwip'd too—'tis your only teſtimony!
And may confound a traitor. To the Caſtle!
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE, RATIBOR'S *Apartment.*

He ſitting, with a book.

By this the deed is done! how ſtill the Palace!
Rudolph will ſoon be here to tell me all!
He dies then, and the black tale dies with him.
This can ſeal down the moſt loquacious tongue.
[*Shews a poniard.*]
My brain now akes with expectation—O!
The foot, that brings ambition to his aim,
Should be as ſwift as the keen northern wind,
And as inviſible! I'll read awhile!
In vain! my eye courſes o'er words and words,
From which no meaning ſtrikes the wand'ring mind.
How, if he fail!—I hear a noiſe—He comes!
How weak was my alarm! (*triumphantly*)

Enter WIRTEMBERG.

Well Rudolph? ha! my brother! Wirtemberg!

WIRTEMBERG.

I wonder not at your alarm, my brother,
To ſee me thus, by miracle I think,
Sav'd from the ſwords of an aſſaſſin band,
Who ruſh'd upon me, as, with ſlender train,
I journey'd through the wood.

RATIBOR.

You bleed, Sir,
Are you not hurt?

WIRTEMBERG.

But triflingly, I think.
Thanks to this mail within my outer garment.
The villains wore the habit, as it ſeem'd,
Of the aſſociates to our ſecret Judges.
They might miſtake me for ſome chief proſcrib'd,
And thus attempted to inflict the ſentence,
Which, uſually, in unfrequented tracts,
Strikes the loſt victim.

RATIBOR.

Rather ſay, my liege,
Some traitorous attempt to cut you off,
And inſtigated by a hidden foe.

WIRTEMBERG.

WIRTEMBERG.

I do not think I have one; for my power
Has ſtill purſued alone my people's good.
Where is my nephew Herman?

RATIBOR.

Did he not
Return with you? He went, he ſaid, to meet you,
And I fear ——

WIRTEMBERG.

Speak plainly, brother.
Has Herman's conduct giv'n you ground to think?
I tremble to enquire—He heſitates!—
Unnatural boy—I lov'd him like a parent.

RATIBOR.

Sir, you outrun my fears, they pointed not
That way, although of late his conduct much
Is chang'd for diſſolute and unbridled manners.
But who comes thus in haſte?

Enter SOLDIER.

My liege, I grieve my duty bids me ſpeak,
A moſt unwelcome truth—Our young Prince, Herman,
We o'ertook near the place of your attack,

With his ſword drawn and bloody.—He demands
To ſpeak, in explanation, 'fore your grace.

RATIBOR.

What, has the devil work'd him to my toils?
This is beyond my hopes. *(aſide)*

WIRTEMBERG.

Accompliſh'd villain!
Tell him, in me, his intereſt is gone.
Let him addreſs himſelf unto our brother.
O, poiſon to the ſoul, obdurate vice,
Let but ambition touch the chords of feeling,
The ſtrings relax and ſhrivel in the blaze,
And nature's ſtifled in the unnatural fire.
Dear Ratibor pity me, and take the ſeat
Of judgment more impartial than my own.
[*Exit.*

RATIBOR.

Bring up the Prince, and then attend without.
[*Exit Soldier.*
How! found ſo near, and thus a combatant,
Belike that Rudolph periſh'd by his hand—
But he approaches.

HERMAN.

Where's the gracious Duke,
To whom my explanation is addreſs'd?

RATIBOR.

RATIBOR.

His pow'r's in me, to bring thee to thy anſwer.

HERMAN.

Anſwer to thee! to a malicious foe,
And one, who, if appearances were righted,
Should ſtand ſuſpected, not as I do wrongly.
Dar'ſt thou to breathe a doubt of my true love?
Look on me—ſhake not in the judgment ſeat.

RATIBOR.

An humbler tone would better ſuit the guiltleſs.
Wert thou not found, as they report the fact,
Near to the ſpot, where they attack'd the Duke,
And thy ſword ſtain'd with gore?

HERMAN.

And this is true,
But yet you muſt not thence preſume to think
Me the aſſaſſin.

RATIBOR.

Yes, and I accuſe thee,
That, mov'd by helliſh malice, thou haſt ſuborn'd
A band of ruffians to aſſail the Duke —

HERMAN.

O that this arm were not now weaponleſs!
But what ſtill hinders, naked though I am,
That I ſhould ruſh thus on thy coward frame,
And trample calumny beneath my foot.

RATIBOR. *(ſtamps with his foot.)*

Enter SOLDIERS.

Seize him, and bear him hence to cloſe confinement.

HERMAN.

Hark thee, thou very wretch—At the Tribunal
Where I ſhall meet this charge, I'll tell a tale
Shall blank the impudence of accuſation.
Till then, take my defiance—for I know thee.

[*Exit guarded.*

RATIBOR.

'Tis well, that threat has arm'd me, The Tribunal!
But I may cut thy pleadings briefly boy.
Rudolph is ſlain, and known by him perhaps—
I'll ſend to ſeek the body inſtantly.

Re-enter WIRTEMBERG.

From the ſad couch of exquiſite diſeaſe
I turn to liſten to ungrateful treaſon.
Bear with me brother, if this tide of evil

O'er

O'er paſs the manly boundaries of temper.
How brook'd the villain your interrogation?

RATIBOR.

As I expected, with outrageous fury:
Like ſome fierce ſavage ſtruggling in the toils,
Whom the alarmed hunter views at hand,
He ruſh'd in powerleſs rage to ſeize my perſon;
The ſummon'd guards compell'd him then to priſon.

WIRTEMBERG.

What urg'd he nothing in his mere defence?

RATIBOR.

Nothing; but on my head recrimination.
Unſpotted truth makes malice impotent.
My perſonal wrongs ſhall not invade my juſtice.

WIRTEMBERG.

Give orders ſtraight to bring him to his trial.
Now to my ſuffering love, o'er whom the dart
Of death yet menaces—not long in vain.
Though bred to horrors, in the ſchool of battle
The ſoldier ſtudies the grim tyrant's art,
And ſpeculates innumerable wounds;
Reſtor'd to thy ſoft reign domeſtic peace,
He deeper mourns than others the decree,
Which tears his conſolation from his arms. [*Exit.*

RATIBOR.

Matilda muſt not live—ſhould ſhe recover,
A mewling Mammet might at length ſtart up
And ſtep between me and my promis'd good.
That Badendorff has prov'd a genuine leach;
Has pledg'd himſelf to *puſh* her from the verge,
If long ſhe linger.—He ſhall be *my* phyſician.
No, hold you there—his conſcience is too ſupple;
Another might outbid for his preſcriptions.

[*Exit.*

SCENE, *a Dungeon in the Caſtle.*

Enter ULRIC, *and then* HERMAN.

HERMAN.

Come friend, conduct the innocent to priſon,
Let murder and ambition roam at large,
Stab in the day, and none avenge the deed—
I aſk'd but to be heard, and was denied.

ULRIC.

Dear Prince, yet moderate this uſeleſs rage.
All that the limited authority
I have, can give you, gratitude ſupplies,
However end the cauſe that now confines you.

HERMAN.

HERMAN.

My comfort is, that I ſhall meet that fiend,
Where juſtice ſtrikes the guilty.

ULRIC.

I am order'd,
By no means to confine you rigorouſly;
Your friends may have acceſs to viſit you.

HERMAN.

Ulric, I think thy friendſhip is a bleſſing,
Which no ſurmiſe alone can ever ſhake.
Wilt thou entreat the lovely Ida hither;
Her counſel will ſuſtain my reſolution.

ULRIC.

I will dear Prince—and ſuffer no intruſion.
But I'm prevented—lo, ſhe comes to ſeek you.
[*Exit.*

Enter IDA.

Where is he—let me claſp him to my heart!
Away with coy and maidenly reſerve,
Let modeſty be bold when virtue ſuffers!
Have they writ there on that ingenuous front
The aſſaſſin's title?—'tis to blaſpheme nature,
And make apocryphal her ſacred text,—

HERMAN.

Bear witneſs, gods, I joy in this diſaſter!
It has procur'd for me more genuine tranſport,
Than years of unſuſpected life had giv'n.
Were I to die, I ſhould depart in peace;
Thy love would waft my ſpirit into bliſs.
O my ſoul's only hope—I've much to tell thee!
I've been betray'd, and deeply wrong'd, my Ida,
Even by the villain who conſpir'd this treaſon.

IDA.

I heard the vague reports, how thou wert found—
Your ſword too recently embath'd—

HERMAN.

My ſword,
O, no! the ſword the ſoldiers found upon me
Was none of mine—I met its flying maſter;
Engag'd him, in the ſcuffle we exchang'd
Our weapons—then the aſſaſſin fled—the ſword,
Which had been his, upon my nearer view
Expreſs'd its owner, "Officer to Ratibor."
That circumſtance muſt never paſs our lips,
Until the judges call for my defence.

IDA.

And can you thus ſecurely wait a trial?

HERMAN.

HERMAN.

The innocent know no alarm at juſtice.

IDA.

Not, when, in midnight ſecrecy and ſilence,
Judges diſguis'd myſteriouſly decide,
Unknown, unſeen, the terrors of mankind!—
I think my feeble frame would die with horror,
And find a grave ere prejudice could doom me.

HERMAN.

Think not, my Ida, their deciſions partial—
Their eyes are every where—unſeen they hear—
Their agents mingle in the walks of life,
And even our ſervants are their ſecret ſpies.

IDA.

Still Juſtice ſhould not maſk her awful face,
O, if there be a land, where equal laws
And open judgment are the claims of all,
Where thoſe of our own rank pronounce upon us,
There true deciſion calls on puniſhment,
Temper'd in anger by enthroned Mercy.

HERMAN.

The viſion lifts my ſoul—and thou my country,
May'ſt ere long emulate the "Iſle of Glory."

But

But with thy forms, however harſh they ſeem,
The good man will comply. Still art thou juſt.

IDA.

But are we ſure, you ever may abide them?
He who could find a poniard for a brother,
May not await the uncertain march of judgment.
Ah then, my Prince, fly from aſſaſſination,
Fly to the humble manſion of my father,
Now while thus ſlackly guarded—

HERMAN.

How, my Ida,
Will that not be preſumption of my guilt?

IDA.

To Wirtemberg at firſt perchance it may—
But, public ſummons to appear once iſſued,
You can explain your flight before the judges.

HERMAN.

Sure heav'n inſpir'd that thought—I yield me to it.
Thy love ſhall nerve me to the prudent toil—

IDA.

O would my wiſh could give Herculean power!
Chains ſhould be goſſamer that claſps the roſe,
And the ſtrong fortreſs as the yielding corn,
Through which the light roe bounds her airy way.

HERMAN.

HERMAN.

Farewell, my love—be large in hope—

IDA, *(embracing)*.

Farewell!

[*Exit.*

HERMAN.

Now to explore my priſon—ere the morn
I ſhall be free at leaſt from private wrong.
O, how prevailing are love's arguments!
Light of my ſoul, accompliſh all thy work!

[*Exit.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Superb Antichamber.

Enter RATIBOR, *and to him* IDA.

IDA.

Sir, your attendant ſignified your pleaſure,
I ſhould thus come before you.

RATIBOR.

Not ſo, fair one.
He did my thoughts injuſtice, if his tongue
Gave to requeſt the language of command;
For I am here the ſuppliant.

IDA.

My Lord!

RATIBOR.

O chace that wint'ry ſcowl of cold reſerve,
It ill requites the fervour of a lover.
When laſt we met, I ventur'd to preſent
A hint for your mature conſideration ——
Shall I be more explicit now?

IDA.

It needs not.
On ſuch a theme I cannot, will not liſten;
I beg I may return—my aid within,
By this is wanted.

RATIBOR.

Stay, for I command you.

IDA.

Command! am I awake? Is this the Palace?

RATIBOR.

Off with this flimzy veil of admiration.
Hear me ſpeak plainly—Your ear may not be tun'd
To accents ruder than a traitor whiſpers;
Your gallant lover, the guilt-ſpotted Herman.

IDA.

And doſt thou dare to talk to me of treaſon?
Thou whoſe dark ſoul—but I forbear thy portrait.
He is too amiable for thy endurance—
Too near a crown not to alarm thy envy.

RATIBOR.

Am I thus brav'd, and for a vile aſſaſſin?

IDA.

O, that he had thee in ſome deſert wild,
Without one bravo's ſword to ſhelter thee!
Where the keen vulture waited for the vanquiſh'd,
To prove upon thy heart the ſland'rous falſehood!

RATIBOR.

Truce with this high heroic flight, and mark me.
His life is in my power, and you may ſave it.

IDA.

O teach me how, and though thou haſt enſnar'd him,
I will endeavour to forget the wrong,
And honour thee for mercy ſhewn at laſt.
Behold, I kneel and ſupplicate your pity.
Youth may have led me too precipitately—

RATIBOR.

Who triumphs now? Ariſe, and hear the terms,
The only terms, on which I deign to ſave him.
Teach thy coy charms compliance with my will—

IDA.

Not for the wealth of worlds.

RATIBOR.

The villain dies.

IDA.

Inhuman! is this love? Behold my tranſports!
Feaſt on the agonies that ſhake this frame,
And glut thee with my groans.—Curs'd be my tongue
For the mean ſupplication it has fram'd!
No, I will not implore. Poſſeſs me now
The black and ſilent horror of deſpair.

RATIBOR.

Fantaſtic, changeful ſex! in mad extremes
By boiling paſſions ſtill to tempeſt toſt,
And the light ſhallow bark of reaſon flung
At random o'er the waves, engulph'd and ſunk.
I half diſdain the prize I will atchieve.

Enter ULRIC.

My Lord, pardon, I pray, this bold intruſion.
Herman has in the night eſcap'd from priſon.

IDA.

Hah!

RATIBOR.

Let purſuit be made—ſtay, no, retire.

[*Exit* ULRIC.

IDA.

Now monſter, I defy thee—He will meet
His judges in the perfect ſpirit of truth,

And bring home to thee all thy black deluſions.
The hand of Heaven is ſtretch'd to diſappoint thee.
[*Exit.*

RATIBOR.

One way this flight may ſerve me. It conveys
A clear preſumption, that he dreads a trial,
And furniſhes to bold and dextrous heads,
The means to render his defence ſuſpected.
Now to acquaint the Duke of his eſcape—
His ſpouſe diſpatch'd, and Herman in my graſp,
The failure of one blow may be repair'd,
Then minion thou ſhalt feel me.
[*Exit.*

Holſtein's Houſe.

HOLSTEIN *following* ELLEN.

HOLSTEIN.

Would I had liſten'd to my boding heart,
Nor ſuffer'd Ida to have left our roof!
Danger ſurrounds her now in every ſhape;
That fancy cannot aggravate the peril.

ELLEN.

Speak plainly to my eager apprehenſions.
What menaces my child? Dear Sir, inform me.

HOLSTEIN.

I have been liſtening to ſuch things, my Ellen,
That a wild chaos overpowers all thought.
The Prince, our Herman, now is cloſe confin'd,
Suſpected to have been the vile aſſaſſin,
Who, arm'd, aſſail'd the Duke within the wood.

ELLEN.

O, he is innocent. I would be bold
To hazard even ſalvation on his truth.

HOLSTEIN.

I think no leſs—but truth may be betray'd,
And innocence by foul inſidious arts
Wear the apparent garb of guilt. Yet worſe,
To his accuſer, Ratibor, the Duke
Conſigns the charge of bringing him to judgment.

ELLEN.

The gracious Prince himſelf—

HOLSTEIN.

Is one engroſs'd
And ſwallowed up by grief—ſilent he ſits
By the pale ſpectre of his wedded joy,
And trembles like the Flamen, who beheld
The ſacred flame but glimmering to expire.

ELLEN.

All power then reſts in Ratibor, his brother.

HOLSTEIN.

Yes, and the knaviſh herd have found the fact.
Their hypocritic ſympathy with grief,
Paſs but the door that bounds the royal preſence,
Is chang'd to ſmiles and bows, that ſilent ſpeak
A leſſon to the greatneſs which they flatter.

ELLEN.

But ſee, one comes in haſte; the Prince, 'tis Herman.

Enter HERMAN.

Are we alone, good friends, quite unobſerv'd?
I would not ſubject thoſe I love to cenſure
For the kind ſhelter which I muſt implore.

HOLSTEIN.

You are quite private; and command your ſervant;
This caution, Sir, informs us you have fled—

HERMAN.

Not from the judgment, but the aſſaſſin's dagger.
I had remain'd a thoughtleſs ſacrifice,
But clear conviction from your Ida's tongue
Taught me the peril, urg'd me to eſcape—
With patient effort I unfix'd the bars

That grated the high window of the dungeon,
And by the aid of a ſtrong coil of rope,
Which from a rack I took within the cell,
Deſcended to the baſe—the foſſe was dry;
Night and the ſilence of my lonely work
Eluded the high centry's cold obſervance,
And I arriv'd, I think, by all unnoted.

HOLSTEIN.

What is your object, Prince?

HERMAN.

To wait citation.
When the dark ſummons of the ſecret judges,
Calls me to anſwer for imagin'd treaſon,
Immediately I will preſent myſelf
And hurl confuſion upon Ratibor—
Till then I muſt requeſt your houſe's ſhelter.

ELLEN.

I will myſelf prepare for your concealment;
And, while you ſtay, attend alone upon you.
My heart bleeds for you, in this dreadful buſineſs.

HERMAN.

Grieve not thus over-much the proof of virtue.
The faithleſs bark, whoſe planks are rotted through,
Sinks at the firſt rude buffet of the gale:
But the tough timber'd lanch, with heart of oak,
Stems the loud torrent, and repells its ſurge,
Bearing in billowy triumph for the ſhore.

[*Exeunt.*

A Gothic

A Gothic Chapel.

A Statue of HERMAN's *father.*

Enter RATIBOR.

This feign'd devotion and continual prayer
Work wonders on dull Grief's credulity,
Sorrow ne'er plucks the napkin from the eye,
To ſcrutinize for tears, but counts them there,
And numbers ſighs of wearineſs for woe.
How ſoon our terror leſſens!—I who ere while
Shook at the phantoms of my idle brain,
Now plot deſtruction ev'n before the ſhrine,
Behold! the frowning front of Herman's father!
How ſolemn and majeſtic, how ſevere!
On me he bends the gaze—of ſenſeleſs ſtone—
I'll look on it no more.

Enter a VERGER.

My Lord, a letter.

RATIBOR.

I'm not to be diſturb'd. From Badendorff!
'Tis well my gentle friend—I pray you leave me.
[*Exit* VERGER.

Reads.

" To the Lord Ratibor.

" All is accompliſh'd.

" The deadly mixture is by your command
" Infus'd, and Ida miniſters the draught.
" Ere this your ſiſter dies.

(Signed) " Badendorff."

'Tis well—ſhe ſits not near my heart—Soft, ſoft!
What were it beſt to do with that gay fugitive,
Herman? I have it—He has broken priſon!
That beſpeaks guilt—I will foreſtall his ſentence.
What if, without a ſlow deliberation,
I wrote the ſecret order for his death,
Pretending to have born it from the judges:
It ſhall be ſo. [*He ſteps to a table and writes.*
Stay, who ſhall execute it?
Ulric, for that I think he favours him
And ſuffer'd his eſcape, bound by an oath,
Which even demons ſhudder when they hear,
I'll puniſh by entruſting with the charge.
By my appointment he ſhould now be here.
And ſee, he comes—Up paper for the preſent—

Enter ULRIC.

My Lord, in ſtrict obedience to your will,
I come to learn your pleaſure and perform it.

RATIBOR.

I look'd, Sir, for no leſs—Do I not know thee,
Moſt zealouſly attach'd to the Tribunal,
So that, whate'er its high decrees enjoin'd,
Thou would'ſt perform the bidding!

ULRIC.

Gracious Sir,
I hope no act of mine has made it needful
Thus to remind me of my obligations.

RATIBOR.

RATIBOR.

Not abſolutely ſo—But this we think:
The mere indifferent act of puniſhment,
When blood or friendſhip ſuffer not the blow,
Aſks little reſolution from the agent;
But, when it menaces a breaſt beloved,
The fortitude that ſtrikes is ſtrong indeed.

ULRIC.

Your ſolemn preparation teaches me
My heart muſt ſuffer by the preſent duty.

RATIBOR.

The traitor Herman is adjudg'd to die—
A ſentence from the ſecret Judges dooms him,
And you are fix'd upon to execute it.

ULRIC.

If ever I found favour in your ſight,
Spare me, dread Sir, the horror of the taſk!
I lov'd him as a brother—We were bred
In the ſame ſchool of youthful exerciſe,
And he has heap'd his friendſhip on my head—

RATIBOR.

There is no remedy—Thy hand muſt ſtrike him.

ULRIC.

O bid me rather plunge th' accurſed ſteel
In my own boſom—'twill be mercy in you,
Compar'd with murderous ingratitude.

RATIBOR.

RATIBOR.

Think of your oath—The aſſociate among us,
Who even ſpares the boſom which has rear'd him,
Is perdurably damn'd. Think that the fiends,
Who wait for perjur'd ſouls, are hovering round
To diſappoint the juſtice we are ſworn to.

ULRIC.

O miſerable ſtate!

RATIBOR.

I tell thee, Ulric,
That were the ſilver'd head ev'n of a parent
Condemned to fall, theſe hands could execute,
Though nature ſhriek'd at the tremendous deed.
[*a piercing ſhriek without.*]
Hah! (*ſhuddering*) what ſea of blood riſes before me!
While through the crimſon waves a phantom glides
In threat'ning horror!—Lo! it is my ſiſter—
O ſhield me Ulric from her frown. Hide, hide me,
[*clings to his boſom.*]

ULRIC.

Your fancy, labouring on a dreadful theme,
Preſents this image of reality.

RATIBOR.

How, did it feign that ſhriek too?

ULRIC.

No, my Lord.

But

But I much fear it ſpoke, I heard it plainly,
Your ſiſter dead. It came from her attendants.

RATIBOR.

O, true—tis very like, indeed, good Ulric.
I ſhall ſubdue this fanciful delirium,
And teach my grief the natural flow of ſorrow.
The Duke, my brother, comes—his look confirms it.
Here, Ulric, take the warrant, and be firm.

[*He gives him the letter of Badendorff inſtead of the ſentence.*]

When next I meet you at the ſecret court.
Thy lifted dagger tells me he is dead.

ULRIC. *(aſide)*

It is reſolv'd; that way alone is left me.

[*Exit* ULRIC, *in great diſorder.*

Enter WIRTEMBERG.

O, whither ſhall I bear this bulk of grief,
Where find a med'cine to my great affliction?
Brother, ſhe's gone, my wife is flown for ever,
And but the dregs of life remain behind!

RATIBOR.

O ſay not ſo, dear Sir.

WIRTEMBERG.

Even in my arms
Her quiet ſpirit from its feeble dwelling
Aſpir'd

Aſpir'd to Heav'n—I claſp'd the gentle earth,
Till all the fervour given by pain grew cold,
Its icy claſp at length ſtruck to my heart—
I ſhudder'd and withdrew.

RATIBOR.

Have her phyſicians
Pronounc'd the latent cauſe of her deceaſe.

WIRTEMBERG.

How can I whiſper to thy generous ear
What my enquiry learn'd! that Badendorff,
In the low ſullen tone of horror, hinted
His fears of poiſon.

RATIBOR.

Ah, my mind miſgives me!
Some curs'd accomplice of that murderous ſlave.

WIRTEMBERG.

Dear ſpirit, yes—Be this thy meed of ſorrow,
The eager vengeance upon thy aſſaſſins.
Give inſtant orders to examine ſtrictly
All her attendants—Send them to the rack!
Find but the wretch, and give her to my fury.

RATIBOR.

With winged ſpeed.—Now to conſummate all.

[*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT III.

ACT

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Palace.

IDA, *alone,*

Since my dear Sov'reign died, a ſullen ſtupor
Has rob'd me of reflection. Even the terror
Of interrogatory back'd by torture,
Fail'd to arouſe me. Slowly ſenſe returns,
And reaſon ſtrives to work upon remembrance.
I call to mind ſome doubts expreſs'd of poiſon.
O, could there boſom black enough be found,
To ſtrike at ſuch an angel?
Why, I know not,
But I am yet unqueſtion'd—Sure my heart
Will ſpeak its love by language ſo convincing,
That ev'n malicious hate would credit me.
I ſhould enquire the event—but every face
Would by its woe increaſe the pangs I feel.

[*The door is thrown open ſuddenly by* HOLSTEIN, *who totters forward to one ſide; and in large letters the following is ſeen affixed to it:*]

IDA HOLSTIEN, TRAIT'RESS! APPEAR BEFORE THE SECRET AVENGERS OF THE ETERNAL.

Gracious Heav'n, my Father!

[*He ſilently points to the placard.*]

Speak to me!

Or I ſhall die with horror—Do I wake?

HOLSTEIN.

Lo, thy poor father, ſtung by thy diſhonour,
Is hither come to rend his hoary hair,
And ſo expire before thee. (*falls*)

IDA.

O look up,
Kill me not thus, my father, with your anguiſh;
Look up, and hear your child.

HOLSTEIN.

Begone, pollution!
Thou ſtain of my unſullied life and honour!
But, god of juſtice, hear me! if this wretch
Be guilty of the crime imputed to her,
Send thy ſharp vengeance down, and ſtrike the trait'reſs!
Or let her live—but live to ſee like me,
A darling object canker'd and deprav'd,
To break her heart with grief, and ſo expire.

IDA.

Yet hear me, O, my father—I am innocent.

HOLSTEIN.

I will be calm and hear thee—O, my child,

Did

Did I ere think, when, ſmiling in theſe arms,
Thy infancy ſeem'd conſecrate to goodneſs,
That thus I ſhould behold thee ſtain'd at laſt!

IDA.

Yet ſtill that ſacred breaſt—By him I ſwear
Whoſe eſſence is the truth, I know no more
Of what they charge upon me, than the babe
Whoſe eyes firſt opens on a ſinful world.

HOLSTEIN.

Guilt cannot be thus ſtedfaſt—my dear daughter,
Yet muſt there be preſumptions of thy guilt;
I tremble to enquire them.

IDA.

Lord of my being!
Were I ſo wretchedly eſtrang'd from virtue,
Could I thus gaze upon that form rever'd?
From which no act of mine, ſo mercy ſave me,
Ere merited parental ire ſhould frown.
Lead me! where I may anſwer my accuſers.

HOLSTEIN.

Alas! my child, I know not where myſelf.
The great avengers ſecretly aſſemble—
No man divulges where.

IDA.

How then, though cited,
Is the accuſed perſon brought to judgment?

HOLSTEIN.

I can acquaint you ſo far—All accus'd,
When the firſt quarter after midnight tolls,
Go to the centre of the Market-place—
Thence they are led before the Secret Judges.
If guilty, they are never heard of more.

IDA.

My father, do I tremble?

HOLSTEIN.

Glorious Ida! *(embraces her)*
I'll lead you to the place.

IDA.

It is now late—

HOLSTEIN.

It is—Look! when yon orb illumes the heavens,
Above the ſpire, that fronts the palace gate,
It will be time we ſecretly ſet forward——

IDA.

You'll ſtay with me, until the hour arrive.

HOLSTEIN.

I will my child—My limbs will ſcarce ſupport thee,
Old, and thus palſied by ſurpriſe.—Come, Ida.

[*Exeunt.*

Holſtein's

Holſtein's Houſe.

Enter ELLEN, *followed by* HERMAN.

ELLEN.

O tell me not of comfort—She's devoted!
Accurſed tyranny has reach'd her life!
I could as ſoon be brought to think her guilty,
As credit her acquittal.

HERMAN.

Madam, hear me!
Know you the independence of her judges?
Be ſatisfied, they'll aſk for other proof,
Than the mean artifice of Ratibor.

ELLEN.

Would ſhe had ne'er approach'd the domes of greatneſs!
Had ſhe not been unfortunately loved—

HERMAN.

I pardon the reproaches of deſpair.
But as my paſſion drew this ſtorm around her,
I'll fly, and either diſſipate the danger,
Or periſh with her.

ELLEN.

Say, what means my ſon?

HERMAN.

To haſten and defend her—Where's your huſband?

ELLEN.

Soon as the public accuſation met him,
A burſt of paſſion blinded his diſcernment—
The ſoldier's honour govern'd all his mind;
He rav'd of ignominious diſgrace,
A life of glory blaſted now by treaſon.

HERMAN.

Alas, unhappy friend! Went he in anger?

ELLEN.

I beg'd his patience, but he flung me from him;
And, imprecating curſes on himſelf,
Vow'd if his daughter faulter'd at his preſence,
He would himſelf puniſh his houſe's ſtigma.
And thus at duſk he left me for the palace.

HERMAN.

Madam, I go—thus menaced by a villain,
I will this inſtant ruſh to the Tribunal,
Defend myſelf and her—If there I fall,
And guilty power deſtroy my Ida with me,
O do not hate my memory! Farewel!

(*As he is going out—enter* ULRIC *in armour and the ſable plumes and mantle of the Tribunal.* HERMAN *ſtarts.*)

HERMAN.

Sir! ſpare a woman's terrors.

[*Ulric ſigns to* ELLEN, *who goes out.*

Now, your pleaſure.

ULRIC.

To Herman, a convicted foul aſſaſſin,
A parricide, a fugitive from priſon,
The Inviſibles decree immediate death.

HERMAN.

And could their cruelty find out no hand
To urge the vengeance home, but thine, my friend?
For, thus in terrors cloth'd, I know my Ulric.
And wilt thou ſtrike the boſom that has lov'd thee?

ULRIC.

Oh! [*turning aſide.*

HERMAN.

Do not turn away, my early friend!
Think not I meanly wiſh to owe my life,
To the oppoſing friendſhip againſt duty.
It is my wiſh to meet theſe dark avengers.

ULRIC.

Would it were in my choice to lead you there!
Heav'n knows the anguiſh that this cruel office
Has planted in my heart—but 'tis not mine,
To mitigate, but execute their pleaſure.

HERMAN.

Lo! I am ready— [*baring his breaſt.*

ULRIC.

Spare me yet awhile.
A few ſhort moments to this ſtruggling fondneſs!
Then as we liv'd in amity together,
United we will quit this wretched world.

HERMAN.

What means my Ulric?

ULRIC.

To perform my oath;—
But never to ſurvive the deed of horrour.
Seek not to ſhake my well determin'd purpoſe:
We die together—Let that expiate all.

HERMAN.

Might I but hope my Ida were ſecure,
I think my death would never raiſe a pang.

ULRIC.

I am forbid to ſpeak—See there, peruſe
The mandate, which thus buries us together.

[*Gives the letter.*

HERMAN.

Amazement! horror! providential mercy!

ULRIC.

What means my friend—O give me the contents!
That warrant is for death—'twas Ratibor—

HERMAN.

It was indeed: mark, Ulric, its contents.
" To Ratibor.
" All is accompliſhed.
" The deadly mixture is, by your command,
" Infus'd, and Ida miniſters the draught,
" Ere this your ſiſter dies."
" Badendorff."

ULRIC.

Myſterious powers, for this eternal thanks. [*kneeling.*
His order death, and this the warrant giv'n!
'Tis virtue now to diſobey the mandate,
Giv'n by a murd'rer, who uſurps the judge.

HERMAN.

O let us inſtant hence to ſuccour Ida!

ULRIC.

Stay, let me firſt conſider of the means.
I riſk my life to ſave her. Herman, hear me.
You ſhall for me appear at the Tribunal;
Ev'n in this dreſs—I'll teach you the dark ſignals;
Deſcribe the place of ſubterraneous meeting.
Haſte to the market place—One there will meet you:
To his two queſtions, anſwer "earth and groan."
He leads you to the centre of the wood,
Where, to the queſtion of the guard there plac'd,

" How many ſteps lead to the throne of truth?"
You anſwer " thirty"—When you're in the cave,
And one of rank croſſes the ſolemn court,
Draw and hold up this dagger. There Heav'n ſhield you!
Act then as the emergencies demand.
I'll after Badendorff and lead him thither.

HERMAN.

Let us diſpatch, and change habiliments.
A tempeſt of emotions crouds upon me.

ULRIC.

Nay hence, a moment may be fatal to us.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE, *the Market-place.*

Four ſtreets there centering, and the Church and Porch of St. Bartholomew upon the right hand.
A quarter ſtrikes from the tower.

Enter ſlowly HOLSTEIN, *ſupporting* IDA.

HOLSTEIN.

This is the ſpot—How cold it is, my child.

IDA.

Bitterly keen, and yet my cheek now glows,
Although an ague ſeems to ſhake my joints.

HOLSTEIN.

The chimes have ſtruck, and yet no one appears.

IDA.

My father, look, what dark gigantic form,
Stalks ſolemnly this way?

HOLSTEIN.

Huſh!

[*The Miniſter of Vengeance approaches.*]

Who goes there?

HOLSTEIN.

'Tis Ida Holſtein, and her aged father.

MINISTER OF VENGEANCE.

The Miniſters of Vengeance ſeek the former:
The latter may depart.

HOLSTEIN.

No, lead me with her.
Force not the parent from his guiltleſs child.

MINISTER OF VENGEANCE.

That muſt depend upon your anſwering me.
What are the names we give to theſe four ſtreets?
This which the moon illumines, I call fire,
That in the ſhadow, iron—Name the others.

[*Finding him ſilent.*]

Ha! ſilent—hence! this is no place for you.

HOLSTEIN.

I will not leave my child, my darling—

MINISTER OF VENGEANCE.

[Furiouſly tearing her from him.]

Hence!

[IDA *firſt claſps her father's knees, and then ſubmits.* HOLSTEIN *ſtill about to follow her is prevented by two other followers of the Tribunal, who drive him quite exhauſted into the porch, and exeunt. A long pauſe, after which the ſecond quarter ſtrikes, and then*

HOLSTEIN.

Again that dreary voice reluctant tolls,
In ſullen ſignal, that my child has periſh'd.
Her ſighs now agitate the moaning wind,
And deepen every guſt—Hark, 'tis her voice!
That ſhriek! O God! what horrors croud upon me!
Groans, deadly groans, are humming in my ears,
And my mind ſhapes ſuch horrible conceits,
That my brain boils! Behold, the murd'rer comes,
To tell me that my fears are realiz'd!

Enter HERMAN *in the habit of the Tribunal.*

HOLSTEIN *(ruſhing towards him).*

Thou ſable arm of a myſterious judgment,
Reveal to me her fate—I will ſuſtain it.

Madneſs

Madneſs has touch'd me with his iron mace,
And I am proof againſt calamity.

HERMAN.

Reſtrain this tranſport, my beloved friend—
Know you not Herman?

HOLSTEIN.

He too ſacrific'd!

HERMAN.

No! I am he—follow me—and be firm.
There is nor time nor place for explanation.
Follow, obſerve my conduct—but be ſilent.

[*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

The Scene repreſents a ſpacious Crypt, or vaulted Court of Juſtice, under ground, of Gothic Architecture.—At the upper end is a luminous Croſs of a deep red, and over this, ſurrounded by Clouds, an Eye, radiated with points of fire. A Throne adorned with trophies in gold, upon a ground of black velvet.—The benches of the Judges the ſame.

Dignitaries of the Church.
Canons.—Monks.
Judges.—Advocates.
Banners of the Tribunal.
Knights.—Pages.
Barons.—Wirtemberg.
Attendants with Torches.

They take their ſeats in profound ſilence. Among them HERMAN *in the habit of* ULRIC. RATIBOR *croſſes the Stage:* HERMAN *riſes and holds up his poniard.*

WIRTEMBERG.

Ye miniſters of vengeance! I could wiſh
That any other, than my perſonal wrong,
Had ſummon'd us together at this time,
And more, my nature moves me to regret

On

On that account the eminence I hold;
Since though no partial judgment can be fear'd
From men enlighten'd, ſanctified to truth,
I fear the frailty of this widow'd breaſt,
Too much, to think myſelf diſpaſſionate.
It is well known, with what unnatural hate
A cheriſh'd viper roſe againſt my life;
Ye know his flight—preſumption of his guilt.
But guilt ſtill blacker now obtrudes upon you,
Suborn'd aſſaſſination, timeleſs death.—
Thus, having broke the buſineſs of the ſitting,
Into your hands, I delegate my power,
With full reliance on your grave deciſion.

[*He comes down, and ſits by* RATIBOR; *the Principal Judge takes the Chair.*]

A Bell tolls.

Then, from the extremity of the Hall, the MINISTER OF VENGEANCE *is ſeen leading* IDA *down a flight of ſteps —he brings her forward, ſeats her on a ſtone, and then in a low voice ſpeaks.*

MINISTER OF VENGEANCE.

Theſe are your Judges. You will ſoon be call'd on.
Take off your veil—Your face muſt be uncover'd.

[*He retires.*

Bell tolls again.

A JUDGE.

Ida, accus'd of murder and of treaſon,
We, the inviſible avengers, cite thee

To answer at the awful bar of truth.
Appear, appear, appear!

IDA.

To such citation, I ought not to answer.
I who am Ida, shudder at such crimes.

A JUDGE.

Come hear, and listen to thy accusation.
Thou art accus'd in foul conspiracy,
With the convicted traitor Herman, who,
By mad ambition tempted, sought the crown,
To have abus'd thy confidential trust,
And, by administ'ring a subtle poison,
Struck to the grave our much lamented Princess.
This charge substantiated by proof. Your answer.

IDA.

My gracious Lords, my answer is—Not Guilty.
Lend me your kind indulgence for a while.
I speak not in extenuation now—
For fancy cannot furnish one conjecture,
How this most fearful charge can bear on me.
But here surrounded with mysterious horror,
Yet surely strung with fortitude from heav'n,
I am to beg no ignorance of form
May weigh against me—trusting my defence,
To conscious honour, and unvarnish'd truth.

A JUDGE.

A JUDGE.

Is it not true, that ſuch exceſs of fondneſs
The Princeſs bore thee, thou alone didſt give
Thoſe medicines her phyſicians had preſcrib'd?

IDA.

It is moſt true, ſuch was my honour'd lot.
I gave them, would I had prepar'd them alſo.

A JUDGE.

The dear lamented has been heard to ſay,
She could nor live, nor die without her Ida.
What meant this phraſe, ſo ſingularly ſtrong?

IDA.

Did ſhe ſay ſo? O matchleſs, ſainted ſpirit!
See how my foes convert thy love to guilt!
The reaſon is my pride—'twas faithful ſervice.

A JUDGE.

It is affirm'd you were betroth'd to Herman.
That when his guilt was known, himſelf in priſon,
You viſited him on the night he fled.

IDA.

I did ſo, and I know his innocence.

A JUDGE.

A JUDGE.

Is Herman yet o'ertaken in his flight?
[*To the attendants.*

RATIBOR.

Ulric, my Lords, had order for his ſeizure:
The ſlave reſiſted, and the poniard ſmote him—
Swept him from earth.

IDA.

And have they murder'd thee,
My Lord, my love, my very vital ſpirit!
Hear me, ye judges! I was proud in honour,
And a ſtain there regarded as a wound,
Venom'd beyond the power of cautery.
It was my only wealth, and that I meant
To have brought him ſpotleſs as my nuptial dow'r.
I'm reckleſs now of life—Pronounce your ſentence.
Defence is breathleſs in my Herman's grave!

WIRTEMBERG.

Let not this raſh deſpair be deem'd confeſſion.
If any here have purpos'd her defence,
Let him be ſummon'd.

RATIBOR.

This is lenity,
That ſuch audacious guilt but ill deſerves.

WIRTEMBERG.

WIRTEMBERG.

Let us be juſt, my brother—Lenity
Becomes the Judge, but him eſpecially,
Who aims to emulate the Judge of all.

A JUDGE.

If any here defend the accuſed Ida,
Let him ariſe—Appear, appear, appear.

HERMAN.

(Riſes and takes off his helmet.)

I ſtand forth her defender.

RATIBOR.

Herman! hell! *(aside)*

IDA.

He lives! he lives! Hye pow'rs accept my heart,
And let each fibre ſwell in gratulation,
My Herman is alive!

HERMAN.

Thus I defend her,
My moſt beloved Lord, into your hands
I give the ſentence dooming me to death.

WIRTEMBERG.

Read it aloud.

A JUDGE.

A JUDGE, *(reads)*

To Ratibor, All is accompliſhed.
The deadly mixture is by your command
Infus'd,—

RATIBOR.

'Tis forgery all. A black contrivance meant,
To turn his treaſonous plots upon my head.

ULRIC *brings forward* BADENDORFF.

WIRTEMBERG.

Who wrote that letter?

BADENDORFF.

I did, Badendorff.

WIRTEMBERG.

Suborn'd or freely? Speak, wretch!

BADENDORFF.

Freely wrote it.
But the contents are falſe—The maid accus'd
Ne'er gave the deadly drug; nor was it given.

A JUDGE.

The ſlave prevaricates—

RATIBOR.

I can but ſmile, when villany accurs'd
Imps her dark courſe with injuries like theſe.
The court will give my honour ample juſtice.
But my dear Sovereign's cauſe demands my call
For inſtant puniſhment of that aſſaſſin,
Whoſe bloody weapon was ſecur'd upon him.

HERMAN.

Ye have it in your archives—let me ſee it.

RATIBOR.

Here is the traitor's ſword.

HERMAN.

True; look upon it.
Mark well the legend—Lo! the fiend deſerts him.

RATIBOR.

[*Shudders violently, and lets the ſword fall, which* WIRTEMBERG *ruſhes to take up.*]

WIRTEMBERG.

"Regiment of Ratibor"—What ſhudders ſeize me!

BADENDORFF.

If any doubts remain, let me explain them.
That monſter, yonder, oft had tempted me
To do the abhorred deed this paper ſpeaks of.

In

In fear of agents more corruptible,
I promis'd to perform it—Oft he chid me
For cold delay—At length too certain ſigns
Of ſpeedy diſſolution mark'd her Highneſs;—
Then I diſpatch'd this letter to yon brother,
Deceiv'd him—led him blindly to his fate.

WIRTEMBERG.

Inhuman traitor—Why have all theſe deeds
Aſſail'd the breaſt, that lov'd and cheriſh'd thee?

RATIBOR.

Why? Aſk thy heart? Is but ambition there?
Seek for a cauſe no further—thou haſt found one,
For which all human bonds at once are cancell'd:
Place but that tempter there, a fury riſes
With ceaſeleſs goad, to urge on crime to crime,
Till the wretch dares eternal miſery,
Nor ſhrinks to leap the gulf. Lead to your dungeons.

WIRTEMBERG.

Bear him away. For thee, my deareſt nephew,
[*Exit Ratibor.*
Whom confidence abus'd ſo much has injur'd,
I ſhall endeavour ample reparation.

HERMAN.

I am indeed rewarded in the power
To dedicate my life to do you ſervice,
And mitigate our loſs by love unfailing.

WIRTEMBERG.

But we delay luſtration to this innocent.
Judges of truth, here in the eye of Heav'n
By our moſt dreadful oath, I anſwer for her—
She is innocent.

A JUDGE.

We riſe in confirmation.
Back to the world again, more truly honour'd
[*To* IDA.
By this conviction of your ſpotleſs fame.

Enter ULRIC, *leading in* HOLSTEIN, *and* ELLEN.

WIRTEMBERG.

Holſtein, receive thy daughter.

HOLSTEIN.

O, my child,
Balm of my life, my beautiful, my pious,
I could expire with tranſport in thy arms.
Thus to behold thee ſav'd—I've much to aſk.

IDA.

My mother too, a flood of ſtruggling paſſions
Subdues my heart, and drowns acknowlegments.
The debt of love and gratitude immenſe
Aſks an extended life of zeal to pay.

ELLEN.

Long be that life, my love, and fill'd with honour.
Nor will your danger die without its fruit,
If it encreaſe compaſſion to the ſufferer.
The pureſt innocent through artful malice
May wear the ſemblance of the guilty. Charity
Is large in her conſtruction; ſlow to cenſure.

ULRIC.

My Lords, the inſtrument of a deſign
Which he believ'd your pleaſure, throws himſelf
Upon your liberal juſtice. For the oath,
A ſeal of ſecreſy, yet broke by virtue,
I ſtand accountable.

JUDGE.

He who conſults
The ſacred honour of the cauſe he ſerves,
Corrects its error, to ſecure its glory.

WIRTEMBERG.

But one thing now remains. Amid the ſtorm
Of paſſion, malice, treaſon, which howl'd o'er us,
I heard ſome gentle gales of love breath'd out,
Then, when the heart moſt plainly ſpeaks its pur-
poſe.

HERMAN. (*kneeling*)

Yes, gracious Sir—as warm as thoſe that waft
Saboean odours to the ſinking ſpirits;
Amid the doubts of death they pierc'd my heart,
Add but that bleſſing, make my Ida mine—

WIRTEMBERG.

Take her, and deſtine virtue to the throne.
They who have ſuffer'd, beſt can feel for others.

HERMAN.

Shine forth bleſs'd ſpirit, purified by trial;
My monitreſs, my ever-deſtin'd wife!
To whoſe dear guidance every act ſhall bend,
And all my life be influenc'd by thy virtue.

HOLSTEIN.

My old breaſt akes with tranſport—O, my children,
Bleſſings be on ye! and when in wint'ry nights
I bend acroſs the blaze, and hear without
The ſhrilling blaſt, that drives the ſhuddering ſeaman—
I'll ſtill my fears, and ſit reſign'd, here taught
How, beyond hope, a gracious power can ſave.

THE END.

EPILOGUE,

By the AUTHOR of the PLAY.

Spoken by MISS WALLIS.

SUCH the dread ſcenes of a benighted age,
Now only known in the hiſtoric page:
Thence by our Poet drawn, but to diſplay
Old ENGLISH Juſtice in unclouded day.

But are theſe inſtitutions quite deſtroy'd?
SECRET TRIBUNALS, are none now employ'd?
THOUSANDS. Yes, while we ſink in ſoft repoſe,
Our Judges eyes no gentle ſlumbers cloſe:
The HEART is the tribunal which we fear,
For ever hid, and yet for ever near;
Its AGENTS are the SENSES, and they gain
Intelligence for that ſhrewd JUDGE the Brain.
The mighty cenſure, carefully conceal'd,
Until the DOOM is fix'd lies unreveal'd.

Lo! the warm PATRIOT, that, with ceaſeleſs din,
Clamours againſt his rival, who is IN;
Who loads the land with ruin and diſgrace,
And paints the charms of REVOLUTION'S face—
What ſays the HEART to this?—He wants a PLACE.

The wrinkled TABBY, who, on youthful joy,
Frowns like a fiend, as eager to deſtroy;
Who wears her poor thin frame to ſkin and bone,
In hopes ſhe may detect ſome pair *alone*—

Let

EPILOGUE.

Let but our SECRET COURT the motive ſcan,
The Heart will tell us—all ſhe hopes is MAN:
Give but that banquet to her eager tooth,
" And Virtue may be WAX to flaming YOUTH."

The poor old SOLDIER, whom, in rending pains,
Some pious Daughter's tender breaſt ſuſtains;
Whoſe plain memorial, ſtill in vain renew'd,
Speaks him by unrequited toil ſubdu'd;
Though paſſive ſufferance he can not command,
Yet in his HEART acquits his native land:
From his laſt efforts theſe proud accents riſe,
" Bleſt be my KING, my COUNTRY!" and he dies.

Such the deciſions of our Court, the Heart,
O! may the touches of the Poet's art,
Win there an int'reſt for his injur'd Maid,
And FEELING fix our doom with CANDOUR's aid.